

MINNESOTA



69319

RESEARCH AND  
EVALUATION UNIT  
REPORT

A Research Report  
Produced by the  
RESEARCH AND EVALUATION UNIT  
of the  
Crime Control Planning Board  
444 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101  
November, 1979

by  
Linda Sommerer  
Barbara Davis

**NCJRS**

JUL 11 1980

**ACQUISITIONS**

A PROFILE OF THE MINNESOTA  
JUVENILE COURT POPULATION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report represents a study of the Minnesota juvenile court population. The study was designed to meet three specific needs: 1) to respond to the requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974; 2) to provide data for the Minnesota Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Study Commission; and 3) to supply the Governor, legislature, and criminal justice practitioners accurate information regarding the type of juvenile offender processed through Minnesota's juvenile courts.

The primary questions addressed in this report are:

1. What are the number and characteristics of juveniles being processed through the Minnesota juvenile court?
2. Is it possible to identify specific types of juvenile offenders? (The Crime Control Planning Board's analysis of the serious juvenile offender suggested that certain groups or types of offenders might be usefully identified for the purposes of considering differential treatment or disposition standards and as a means of gaining further knowledge of the nature of delinquent behavior.)
3. Do juveniles' offenses tend to increase in seriousness with age? (In other words, does juvenile delinquent activity progress from status to more serious criminal offenses?)

Demographic and offense information was collected on 1,129 juveniles referred to court during January and June of 1975 from court records in Blue Earth, Hennepin, Nobles, Olmsted, Otter Tail, Pennington, Ramsey, St. Louis, Stearns, and Washington counties.

Among the major findings of the research were the following:

1. The overwhelming majority (78.0 percent) of the juveniles referred to court are male.
2. Approximately 40.6 percent of all juvenile petitions include felony charges, 30.5 percent include misdemeanor charges and 28.9 percent include status offenses.
3. Crimes against property represent the largest proportion (over 50.0 percent) of the cases processed by the court. Crimes against person account for less than 10.0 percent of the cases processed by the court.
4. The removal of status offenses from the jurisdiction of juvenile would reduce the number of females petitioned to court by more than 50.0 percent.
5. There exists a group of juveniles that can be identified as "pure" status offenders (i.e., those juveniles adjudicated for only status offenses). This offender classification is dominated by females. Approximately 16.0 percent of the total juvenile court population could be classified as status offenders.
6. No support is found for the theory that intervention is necessary to prevent status offenders from becoming involved in more serious criminal behavior.
7. There exists within the juvenile court population a small core of delinquents who are responsible for the commission of a disproportionately high number of offenses. Twenty-eight percent of the juveniles sampled committed 62.0 percent of the sustained offenses.
8. The best single predictor of repeat delinquent activity is age at first adjudication. The recidivism rate among juvenile delinquents drops with increasing age. Younger juveniles (i.e., 13 or 14 year olds) have a 73.0 percent return rate to court as compared to 52.3 percent for the older juveniles (i.e., 15 or 16 year olds).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . . . . .	iii
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	vii
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	ix
 <u>Chapter</u>	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION ON JUVENILE COURT'S YEARLY CASELOAD . . . . .	11
A. Demographic Information . . . . .	11
B. Offense Information . . . . .	18
III. PROFILE OF THE JUVENILE COURT POPULATION . . . . .	25
A. The Status Offender . . . . .	25
B. The Escalation Theory . . . . .	28
C. The Chronic Recidivist . . . . .	36
IV. ISSUES . . . . .	43
 <u>Appendices</u>	
A. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS ON THE SERIOUS JUVENILE OF- FENDER . . . . .	55
B. LISTING OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND LEGAL/OFFENSE-RELATED VARIABLES . . . . .	57
C. ESTIMATING PROCEDURE . . . . .	59
D. LIVING ARRANGEMENT IN 1975 BY RACE . . . . .	61
E. LISTING OF OFFENSES BY TYPE OF CRIME . . . . .	63
F. LISTING OF OFFENSES BASED UPON THE TYPE OF VICTIMIZA- TION . . . . .	65
G. RESULTS OF ESCALATION ANALYSIS: MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE COMMITTED AFTER AN INITIAL ADJUDICATION FOR A STATUS OFFENSE BY RACE . . . . .	67
H. SEVERITY SCALE FOR JUVENILE COURT DISPOSITION . . . . .	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	71

# LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
TABLE 1: Race/National Origin of Juveniles in Sample . . . . .	11
TABLE 2: Adjusted Race/National Origin of Juveniles in Sample . . . . .	13
TABLE 3: Age Distribution by Sex (in 1975) . . . . .	15
TABLE 4: Living Situation at Time of 1975 Referral to Court by Race and Sex . . . . .	17
TABLE 5: Petitions to Juvenile Court by Type of Offense and Race (Males and Females) . . . . .	20
TABLE 6: Petitions to Juvenile Court by Type of Victimization and Race (Males and Females) . . . . .	21
TABLE 7: Percentage Breakdown of Petitions by Type of Vic- timization for Study Sample and 1978 Statewide Sample . . . . .	23
TABLE 8: Number and Percentage of Juveniles Classified as Chronic and Nonchronic by Age Groups . . . . .	38
TABLE 9: Return Rates to Court after an Initial Adjudica- tion of Delinquency for a Follow-Up Period of One Year for Select Age Groups by Race and Sex . . . . .	39
TABLE 10: Severity of Disposition Received for Initial Ad- judication by Age Group . . . . .	40
TABLE 11: Number and Percentage of Juveniles in Chronic and Nonchronic Classification by Type of First Of- fense and Age . . . . .	41
TABLE 12: Number and Percentage of Juveniles in Chronic and Nonchronic Classification by Race and Sex . . . . .	41

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>Page</u>
FIGURE 1: Most Serious Offense Committed after an Initial Adjudication for a Status Offense . . . . .	27
FIGURE 2: Escalation Rates by Level of Intervention . . . . .	35

## I. INTRODUCTION

The following report was prepared by the Research and Evaluation Unit of the Crime Control Planning Board,<sup>1</sup> and is based on a study of the juvenile offender within the Minnesota juvenile court.

The study was designed to meet three specific needs: 1) to respond to the requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974; 2) to provide data for the Minnesota Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Study Commission; and 3) to supply the Governor, legislature, and criminal justice practitioners accurate information regarding the type of juvenile offender processed through Minnesota's juvenile courts. These needs are described more fully below.

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act was signed into law in September of 1974.<sup>2</sup> To meet the objectives listed in the Act, the federal government has specified several requirements that must be fulfilled by each participating state. One requirement is that each state must complete a descriptive study of the juvenile justice system. "The study must include a description of the structure and functions of units of the juvenile justice system (police, intake, detention, probation,

---

<sup>1</sup>Minnesota Statute 299A.03 created the Crime Control Planning Board which superseded and replaced the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control.

<sup>2</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974*, Public Law 93-415, 93rd Congress, 2nd sess. (1974), S.821.



and correctional institutions) and a description of the flow of youths through the system, on an annual basis."<sup>1</sup>

The Minnesota Crime Control Planning Board's *Comprehensive Plan* provides an excellent description of the structure and function of each unit of the juvenile justice system. However, the Board recognizes the need to supplement this information with basic descriptive data regarding the juvenile population moving through the system. Reports generated by the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (i.e., *Minnesota Crime Information* and the Department of Corrections provide us with yearly information on juvenile arrests and juvenile commitments.<sup>2</sup> However, there does not exist statewide uniform reporting of juveniles processed through juvenile court. Therefore, this study was designed to provide needed information regarding juvenile court activity and to bring Minnesota into compliance with the requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to complying with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, the study also serves to complement the data compiled by the Minnesota Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Study Commission. The Study Commission focused its efforts primarily on the perceptions of relevant juvenile justice personnel concerning various aspects of the system

---

<sup>1</sup>U.S., Department of Justice, LEAA, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Special Requirements for Participation in Funding under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974*, Ch. 3, Par. 77 (January 16, 1976), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>Summary statistics from these reports are presented in the Minnesota 1977 *Comprehensive Plan* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control, 1977), pp. IV-1 through IV-105.

<sup>3</sup>The Supreme Court is in the process of developing a juvenile court information system.

including intake, certification, and right to treatment. The primary source of data for the Study Commission was a set of questionnaires which were completed by the juvenile court judge, county attorney, chief probation officer, and chief law enforcement officer for each county included in their sample. We provided the Study Commission demographic and offense-related information on the juveniles included in our sample.<sup>1</sup> The data from both sources allows for comparisons of how juvenile court personnel perceive the processing and treatment of juveniles, and what actually transpires.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the study was developed to provide information essential to the investigation of both the serious juvenile offender and the status offender.<sup>3</sup> Because of the urgent need for information on the "violent" or "hard-core" juvenile offender, our research findings on this subject were published earlier in the following reports: 1) *Alternative Definitions of "Violent" or "Hard-Core" Juvenile Offenders: Some Empirical and Legal Implications*<sup>4</sup> and 2) *Serious Juvenile Delinquency in Minnesota*.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>In order to facilitate coordination with the Study Commission, an effort was made to collect data in the same counties. However, due to the difference in criteria used for the selection of counties there is not complete overlap. The Supreme Court Study Commission selected their sample counties on the basis of judicial districts and population size, whereas we utilized our planning regions as the main criterion for sample selection. Even with this discrepancy in sampling both studies still have six out of ten counties in common.

<sup>2</sup>Minnesota Supreme Court, Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Study Commission, *Report to the Minnesota Supreme Court* (1976), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Status offenses are acts committed by children which would not be considered crimes if committed by adults (e.g., truancy, absenting).

<sup>4</sup>Minnesota Crime Control Planning Board (January, 1977), revised April, 1978.

<sup>5</sup>Minnesota Crime Control Planning Board (August, 1978).

A summary of the findings presented in these reports can be found in Appendix A.

With regard to the issue of the "status" offender, a controversy has arisen as to whether or not the jurisdiction over these offenses should be removed from the juvenile court. The purpose of this study was not to debate the pros and cons of this issue but rather to present an empirical profile of the status offender within the Minnesota juvenile court.

The study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the number and characteristics of juveniles being processed through the Minnesota juvenile court?
2. Is it possible to identify specific types of juvenile offenders? (Our analysis of the serious juvenile offender suggested that certain groups or types of offenders might be usefully identified for the purposes of considering differential treatment or disposition standards and as a means of gaining further knowledge of the nature of delinquent behavior.)
3. Do juveniles' offenses tend to increase in seriousness with age? (In other words, does juvenile activity progress from status to more serious criminal offenses?)

The data base for this study was derived from a ten-county sample. Counties participating in the study were Blue Earth, Hennepin, Nobles, Olmsted, Otter Tail, Pennington, Ramsey, St. Louis, Stearns, and Washington.

The counties were selected according to the following criteria:

1. Each of the seven criminal justice planning regions would be represented in the study;<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>At the time the study was initiated, there were only seven criminal justice planning regions in the state.

2. Both metropolitan and outstate areas would be represented; and
3. The main population centers of each region were included.

This sampling method may have an inherent bias in that only the larger population centers were selected. It is possible that the offenses for which juveniles are petitioned to court vary from county to county. However, comparisons with aggregate data indicate that the procedure produced a sample which accurately reflects statewide juvenile court activity.

All juveniles referred to court or intake with a subsequent referral to court<sup>1</sup> during the months of January and June of 1975 were included in the sample. Information regarding all previous court referrals was also collected.<sup>2</sup> Slightly more than 1,100 juveniles comprise the study population. Because the initial data collection phase followed these juveniles only through the end of 1975, additional information was collected on these juveniles for a follow-up period of 18 months. If a juvenile was less than 16 at the end of 1975, we have approximately 1 1/2 years of additional information on him; if he was over 16, we only have information on him up to his eighteenth birthday, when he came under the jurisdiction of adult criminal court.<sup>3</sup> The reason for this update was to obtain complete court histories for the majority of juveniles included in the sample. This

---

<sup>1</sup>Those juveniles whose case was closed at intake (i.e., the case was not referred to juvenile court) were excluded from this study. This reduced the sample size from 1,400 to 1,129 juveniles.

<sup>2</sup>For a complete listing of those variables included in the study, see Appendix B.

<sup>3</sup>The juvenile court can maintain jurisdiction to age 21 for offenses committed prior to age 18.

type of data allows us to examine juvenile offender career patterns.

Prior to presenting the findings of this study, it is important to remember that we are dealing with a juvenile court offender population. There are certain characteristics of this population that make it different from a population of all juvenile offenders. The obvious difference is that these juveniles have appeared in juvenile court. Although this might not seem to be important, an investigation of the prerequisites necessary for referral to juvenile court will illustrate that there is a distinction.

Referral sources (person or agency petitioning or referring the juvenile to court) vary from law enforcement officials to schools.<sup>1</sup> However, referrals from law enforcement agencies to juvenile court comprise 80.0 percent of all referrals.<sup>2</sup> In 1975, there were approximately 35,400 juvenile arrests reported to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.<sup>3</sup> (Because Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth did not report Part II crimes<sup>4</sup> to the state in 1975, the number of juveniles actually arrested that year

---

<sup>1</sup>A petition is a signed form specifically describing alleged acts for bringing a child under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

<sup>2</sup>Minnesota 1976 *Comprehensive Plan* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control, 1976), p. IV-71.

<sup>3</sup>State of Minnesota, Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, *Minnesota Crime Information, 1975* (St. Paul, Minnesota: State of Minnesota, 1976).

<sup>4</sup>Crimes are classified according to the uniform crime reporting standards and fall into two major categories, Part I and Part II. Part I crimes consist of murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, all larceny, and auto theft. Part II crimes consist of arson, simple assault, forgery and counterfeiting, fraud, embezzlement, stolen property, vandalism, weapon offenses, prostitution, other sex offenses, narcotic violations, gambling, liquor law violations, disorderly conduct, vagrancy, and other nontraffic offenses.

was probably considerably higher than 35,400.) Based upon our sample we would estimate that only slightly more than 13,000 delinquency petitions were filed in Minnesota juvenile courts in 1975.<sup>1</sup> Thus a large percentage of juvenile arrests are not accounted for by a petition to court.

This discrepancy can be explained by the following reasons:

1. In the majority of cases, whether or not a juvenile becomes involved with the juvenile justice system depends upon the outcome of an encounter with the police. Initial discretion may be used by the officer to let an incident pass or to apprehend the juvenile. At the point of apprehension, the police still have several alternatives that can be used in determining the outcome of a case:
  - a. The juvenile may be reprimanded and released (with or without notifying the child's parents);
  - b. The juvenile or the parents may be referred to an appropriate community agency;
  - c. The juvenile may be referred to the county attorney or court.

According to the *Minnesota Crime Information, 1975*, only 51.0 percent of all reported juvenile arrests were referred on to court.<sup>2</sup> Law enforcement officers interviewed by the Supreme Court Study Commission indicated that their decision to refer a juvenile to court was based on the following factors:

- a. Seriousness of the offense;
  - b. Past record or past police contacts with the juveniles; and
  - c. The juvenile's attitude.<sup>3</sup>
2. Juveniles may be diverted from court by various intake procedures. "Intake procedures usually involve a screening of cases with the result that some cases are diverted to another agency or person in lieu of petition, while some others may be dismissed altogether."<sup>4</sup> Authority for the intake decision

---

<sup>1</sup>For explanation of estimating procedure, see Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup>State of Minnesota, Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, *Minnesota Crime Information, 1975* (St. Paul, Minnesota: State of Minnesota, 1976).

<sup>3</sup>Report to the Minnesota Supreme Court, by the Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Study Commission (November, 1976), pp. 34-35.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33.

may vary from the county attorney's office to court services.<sup>1</sup>

For example, the intake unit in the Juvenile Division of Hennepin County Court Services and the Anoka County Juvenile Intake Center serve as screening devices for their respective juvenile courts. "In 1976, 43.0 percent of the cases screened by the intake unit of Hennepin County were either referred to a noncourt agency or dismissed."<sup>2</sup> The primary factors used in determining whether or not court action is necessary are the seriousness of the alleged offense, the age of the child and the child's prior record. A study of the Anoka County Juvenile Intake Center found that similar criteria were used in deciding whether or not a juvenile would be referred on to court. The study indicated that the probability of a juvenile being referred to court increased directly with the number of previous contacts the intake unit had with the child or the seriousness of the alleged offense.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the percentage of cases screened out by an intake process varies from county to county. However, the overall result of intake is that a large percentage of cases are diverted from juvenile court.

Based upon the preceding information it appears that the youth who is ultimately referred to juvenile court is likely to have had either a number of previous contacts with the system that were handled informally

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid, pp. 41-43.

<sup>2</sup>Hennepin County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, *Hennepin County Criminal Justice Plan, 1978* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Hennepin County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, 1977), p. IV-6.

<sup>3</sup>Jeffrey Loesch, *Anoka County Juvenile Intake Report* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Evaluation Unit, Crime Control Planning Board, 1978), pp. 10-11.

or is alleged to be involved in a relatively serious offense. For example, law enforcement records in Pennington County indicated that "the average number of offenses per youth as seen by the court is 2.2 while it is 4.3 for law enforcement for the same youth."<sup>1</sup> In other words, the decision to refer to court seems to be based upon the likelihood of a juvenile recidivating or the belief that the juvenile represents a threat to public safety.

---

<sup>1</sup>Dale Good, *An Analysis of Juvenile Justice Systems in Three Minnesota Counties, Part I* (St. Paul, Minnesota Crime Control Planning Board, forthcoming fall, 1979), pp. 43-48.



## II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION ON JUVENILE COURT'S YEARLY CASELOAD

### A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

In this chapter we discuss the demographic and offense characteristics of the sample. For the purpose of this section offense information will be limited to the sampled offense (i.e., those offenses which were referred to court during January or June of 1975).

From this analysis, we will provide a general description of the juvenile court's yearly caseload.

Of the 1,129 juveniles who comprise the study population, 78.0 percent (882) are male and 22.0 percent (247) are female. Table 1 provides a racial/national origin breakdown for the sample.

TABLE 1		
RACE/NATIONAL ORIGIN OF JUVENILES IN SAMPLE		
<u>RACE</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
White	786	69.6%
Black	116	10.3
American Indian	54	4.8
Other	11	1.0
Unknown <sup>a</sup>	162	14.3
TOTAL	1,129	100.0%
<sup>a</sup> See narrative for explanation of unknown.		

As indicated by Table 1, we were unable to secure the race or national origin for 14.3 percent of our sample. (The majority of these cases were

from one county where this information was not maintained in the court files.) So that we would not lose such a large percentage of cases from the analysis, an effort was made to determine the racial distribution for this county. The *Minnesota Crime Information, 1975* was used to approximate the number of minority persons referred to juvenile court. Since the large majority (80.0 percent) of the juveniles in court were referred by law enforcement authorities, we would assume that the proportion of white and nonwhite in the arrest data would not greatly differ from the juvenile court population. According to the arrest information for 1975, the racial breakdown was 96.0 percent white and 4.0 percent nonwhite. (More specifically, 0.8 percent of the total arrests involved black youths and 3.2 percent involved American Indian youths.) There were 111 juveniles included in our sample from this county. Based upon our assumption, we would expect the overall referral rate to juvenile court for minorities would not exceed 4.0 percent. Using the 4.0 percent rate, we would expect approximately four minority youths to appear in our sample from this county. Because of this relatively low frequency, the decision was made to include the juveniles from this county in the "white" category. Although we are introducing a degree of error, the effect on the overall sample is held at a minimum and we have the advantage of including over 100 additional case histories into the analysis. Table 2 presents the adjusted frequencies for race/national origin.

TABLE 2		
ADJUSTED RACE/NATIONAL ORIGIN OF JUVENILES IN SAMPLE <sup>a</sup>		
RACE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
White	897	83.2%
Black	116	10.8
American Indian	54	5.0
Other	11	1.0
TOTAL	1,078	100.0%
<sup>a</sup> Missing values = 51.		

For the purpose of comparing the sex and racial distribution of the juvenile court population with that of the general population the 1970 Census was used. Although the census is somewhat dated, we assumed that the effects of mortality and migration would be random.<sup>1</sup> In 1970, 85.0 percent of our sample was between the ages of 10 and 14. Therefore, census information relating to that age category was used in comparing the two populations. (The 15.0 percent who were younger would not be expected to deviate significantly from the 10 to 14 year olds.)

Based upon our sample, we estimate that approximately 12,900 juveniles are processed through juvenile court within a given year.<sup>2</sup> Further, we estimate that 78.0 percent of these individuals are male and 22.0 percent of them female. The census reflects a male/female ratio in the given age category of approximately 1 to 1.

According to the census the racial breakdown for our age category statewide is 98.0 percent white, 1.0 percent black, and 1.0 percent other

---

<sup>1</sup>See *Minnesota Population Projections, 1970-2000* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Office of the State Demographer, 1975).

<sup>2</sup>For explanation of estimating procedure, see Appendix C.

(including American Indian).<sup>1</sup> As indicated by the percentages in Table 2, both blacks and American Indians were overrepresented by 5 times their proportion in the general population. This high percentage of minorities within the juvenile court population might be partially explained by the particular counties that were included in the sample. Approximately 97.0 percent of all black juveniles and 49.0 percent of all other nonwhites between the ages of 10-14 lived within the ten sample counties. Although the minority population is somewhat higher in these counties (2.0 percent black and 1.0 percent all other nonwhites) our sample still indicates that minorities are overrepresented in the juvenile court population.

In terms of estimating the proportions of nonwhite and white juveniles in court statewide, we would expect the overall percentage of black juveniles to be lower than is represented in our sample.

Table 3 presents the age distribution of the juveniles in the sample. As indicated by the table, the males are slightly older than the females.

---

<sup>1</sup>The 1970 Census did not have a separate category for the American Indian.

TABLE 3						
AGE DISTRIBUTION <sup>a</sup>						
(in 1975)						
AGE <sup>b</sup>	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Less than 12 years old	12	1.4%	---	---	12	1.1%
12 years old	9	1.1	4	1.7%	13	1.2
13 years old	30	3.5	8	3.5	38	3.5
14 years old	87	10.2	34	14.7	121	11.2
15 years old	134	15.7	42	18.2	176	16.3
16 years old	195	22.9	65	28.1	260	24.0
17 years old	238	28.0	58	25.1	296	27.4
18 years old	146	17.2	20	8.7	166	15.3
TOTAL	851	100.0%	231	100.0%	1,082	100.0%
MEAN AGE	16.0		15.8		16.0	
<sup>a</sup> Missing values = 47.						
<sup>b</sup> Ages rounded to the nearest full year.						

Our information on the juvenile's home environment is limited to each parent's marital status in relation to the other natural parent and the child's living situation at the time of his or her 1975 referral to court. Although the data are assumed to be representative of juvenile court, we would not expect it to be representative of the statewide juvenile population. In fact when we look at the 1970 Census, the majority (88.9 percent) of persons under 18 were in residence with both parents, whereas only 50.3 percent of our sample were living with both parents (the category includes parent and stepparent).

Table 4 contains the frequencies of the juveniles' living situation at the time of their 1975 referral to court. The categories have been collapsed for clarity (a complete listing can be found in Appendix D). Of the juveniles living with only one parent, most (88.9 percent) are living with their mother. Also, more males live with both natural parents than

than females do, as do whites compared to nonwhites.<sup>1</sup>

There is a tendency to draw a connection between juvenile delinquency and broken homes. However, other research on this subject has not shown a significant relationship between the two. For example, a study by Hennessy, et al.,<sup>2</sup> reports that most research involving delinquency and broken homes has been done with known delinquents. Children apprehended by the police come predominately from lower income areas, where broken homes are more common and delinquent behavior is more likely to come to the attention of law enforcement and other social agencies. It has also been hypothesized that of the juveniles who are caught, those from complete homes are more likely to be returned to their families with only a warning.

---

<sup>1</sup> Difference of proportions test between males and females yields a statistic of 2.94,  $p < .01$ , between white and nonwhite the statistic is 7.24,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>2</sup> Michael Hennessy, Pamela J. Richard, and Richard A. Berk, "Broken Homes and Middle Class Delinquency: A Reassessment," *Criminology* 18, 4 (1978), pp. 505-528.

TABLE 4  
LIVING SITUATION AT TIME OF 1975 REFERRAL  
TO COURT BY RACE AND SEX

LIVING SITUATION	WHITE		NONWHITE		UNKNOWN		TOTAL	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<u>Both Parents:</u> <sup>a</sup>								
Percent	49.9%	40.3%	16.8%	12.5%	28.9%	7.7%	43.6%	33.2%
Frequency	355	75	19	6	11	1	385	82
<u>One Parent:</u>								
Percent	27.4%	31.2%	63.7%	52.1%	13.1%	38.5%	30.8%	35.6%
Frequency	195	58	72	25	5	5	272	88
<u>Parent and Stepparent:</u>								
Percent	8.4%	11.8%	3.8%	10.4%	7.9%	7.7%	8.3%	11.3%
Frequency	60	22	10	5	3	1	73	28
<u>Alternative Living Situation:</u> <sup>b</sup>								
Percent	6.5%	8.1%	3.7%	16.7%	7.9%	15.4%	6.8%	10.1%
Frequency	46	15	11	8	3	2	60	25
<u>Unknown:</u>								
Percent	7.7%	8.6%	18.6%	8.3%	42.1%	30.8%	10.4%	9.7%
Frequency	55	16	21	4	16	4	92	24
<u>TOTAL:</u>								
Percent	79.3%	20.7%	73.5%	26.5%	74.5%	25.5%	78.1%	21.9%
Frequency	711	186	133	48	38	13	882	247

<sup>a</sup>Includes juvenile living with adoptive parents.

<sup>b</sup>Includes living with relative, living in a foster or group home, county or state institution or child caring center, and living by oneself or other.

## B. OFFENSE INFORMATION

As indicated in the introduction to this section, the offense information presented here will be limited to only those offenses for which the juveniles were referred to court in 1975. By examining the data in this manner, we are able to provide a general description of the types of offenses processed through juvenile court for one year. We assume the offenses sampled during the months of January and June to be representative of the entire year.<sup>1</sup> Also, one would not expect the types of offenses processed by the court to differ greatly from year to year. Information will be presented at the conclusion of this chapter to determine whether or not these assumptions are valid.

Except for a few instances, the number of offenses referred to court will equal the number of petitions filed. The exception to this is where more than one offense is listed on a single petition. In the majority of these cases, the multiple offenses listed are the result of a single act of delinquency. Also, as evidenced by the following tables, the number of petitions filed is greater than the number of individuals in court. Juveniles having more than one petition filed per year account for this discrepancy. Based upon the above conditions, we felt the number of petitions filed to be a more accurate indicator of caseload activity than the total number of offenses or individuals processed. For those cases where more than one offense was listed, the most serious offense, based

---

<sup>1</sup> Although there may be some seasonal variations in the commission of certain crimes, the time delay between arrest and a petition being filed in court would reduce some of this variation. Also, January and June were selected as the sample months to control for possible fluctuations in juvenile activity.



upon maximum statutory penalties, was used.<sup>1</sup>

To simplify the analysis, two separate means of offense classifications were employed. The first method groups the offenses by the general type of crime: felony, misdemeanor, or status.<sup>2</sup> According to the second means of classification, offenses were grouped into categories based upon the type of victimization. They are crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug-related offenses, other criminal offenses, status offenses, and drug violations for minors.<sup>3</sup>

Using our sample of 1,187 petitions as a base, we would estimate that approximately 13,500 petitions are filed in juvenile court on a yearly basis.<sup>4</sup> Further, based upon our sample, we expect a certain distribution of offense, race, and sex in the juvenile court's caseload. This distribution is presented in Tables 5 and 6. Table 5 presents this information based upon the type of offense while Table 6 presents the information based upon the type of victimization.

As indicated by Table 5, we would expect approximately 40.6 percent of all juvenile petitions to include felony allegations, 30.5 percent to include misdemeanor charges and 28.9 percent to include status offenses. By examining the individual cells of the table, we can get a more complete

---

<sup>1</sup>In those cases where two or more offenses listed on the sample petition would receive the same statutory penalty, the following rule was adopted; If one of the offenses listed was a crime against person, that offense was listed for the petition.

<sup>2</sup>A complete listing of all offenses included in each crime type is given in Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup>A complete listing of all offenses included under each crime category is given in Appendix F.

<sup>4</sup>See Appendix C for explanation of estimating procedure.

description of the type of cases (i.e., petitions). For example, we would expect that white males charged with a felony would account for roughly 29.5 percent of the court's total caseload.

TABLE 5							
<u>PETITIONS TO JUVENILE COURT BY TYPE OF OFFENSE AND RACE</u>							
(Males and Females)							
TYPE OF OFFENSE	WHITE		NONWHITE		UNKNOWN <sup>a</sup>		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
<u>Felony:</u>							
Percent <sup>b</sup>	29.5%	1.9%	7.0%	0.8%	1.2%	0.3%	40.6%
Frequency	350	23	83	9	14	3	482
<u>Misdemeanor:</u>							
Percent	20.1%	3.4%	3.8%	2.1%	0.9%	0.2%	30.5%
Frequency	239	40	45	25	11	2	362
<u>Status:</u>							
Percent	13.3%	11.4%	1.0%	1.3%	1.3%	0.7%	28.9%
Frequency	158	135	12	15	15	8	343
<u>TOTAL:</u>							
Percent	62.9%	16.7%	11.8%	4.3%	3.4%	1.1%	100.0%
Frequency	747	198	140	49	40	13	1,187

<sup>a</sup>These percentages represent the maximum to which a cell could vary if the race were known. For example, white females charged with a felony could actually account for 2.2 percent (1.9 percent plus 0.3 percent) of the total petitions filed.

<sup>b</sup>The percentage is the ratio of each cell frequency to the total number of petitions (1,187).

The findings presented in Table 6 show that crimes against property represent by far the largest proportion (51.5 percent) of the cases processed by the juvenile court. This is followed by status offenses which account for 21.4 percent of the total. Crimes against persons, drug-related offenses, other criminal offenses, and drug violations for minors individually accounted for less than 10.0 percent of the total petitions filed. Again, by examining the individual cells of the table we can obtain a finer breakdown of the cases. For example, based upon the findings

presented in this table, we would expect the overall percentage of females petitioned to court for crimes against persons to be relatively low. By adding the row of percentages, we find that petitions involving a female charged with a crime against person would account for only 1.4 percent of the total petitions filed. Both tables indicate that white males dominate (62.9 percent) the juvenile court's caseload, followed by white females (16.7 percent), nonwhite males (11.8 percent), and nonwhite females (4.1 percent).

TABLE 6							
PETITIONS TO JUVENILE COURT BY TYPE OF VICTIMIZATION AND RACE							
(Male and Female)							
TYPE OF VICTIMIZATION	WHITE		NONWHITE		UNKNOWN <sup>a</sup>		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
<u>Crimes against Persons:</u>							
Percent <sup>b</sup>	5.0%	0.4%	2.9%	0.9%	0.5%	0.1%	9.8%
Frequency	59	5	34	11	6	1	117
<u>Crimes against Property:</u>							
Percent	37.1%	4.1%	7.1%	1.7%	1.1%	0.3%	51.5%
Frequency	441	49	84	20	13	4	611
<u>Drug-Related Offenses:</u>							
Percent	3.4%	0.4%	0.3%	---	0.1%	---	4.1%
Frequency	40	5	3	---	1	---	49
<u>Other Criminal Offenses:</u>							
Percent	4.1%	0.3%	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	---	5.7%
Frequency	49	4	7	3	5	---	68
<u>Status Offenses:</u>							
Percent	8.0%	9.9%	0.6%	1.2%	1.0%	0.7%	21.4%
Frequency	95	118	7	14	12	8	254
<u>Drug Violations for Minors:</u>							
Percent	5.3%	1.4%	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%	---	7.5%
Frequency	63	17	5	1	3	---	89
<u>TOTAL:</u>							
Percent	62.9%	16.7%	11.8%	4.1%	3.4%	1.1%	100.0%
Frequency	747	198	140	49	40	13	1,187

<sup>a</sup>These percentages represent the maximum to which a cell could vary if the race were known. For example, white females charged with crimes against persons could actually account for 0.5 percent (0.4 percent plus 0.1 percent) of the total petitions filed.

<sup>b</sup>The percentage is the ratio of each cell frequency to the total number of petitions (1,187).

By understanding some of the general characteristics of the cases processed through the juvenile court, basic decisions can be made with regard to the type of programs that could be developed or used by the court in the treatment of juveniles. For example, by being aware of the fact that the largest proportion of cases processed by the court involve crimes against property, we may wish to allocate resources to develop programs that are designed to treat this type of offender.

Also, this type of information does provide a starting point in assessing the impact on the juvenile court if jurisdiction over the status offenses were removed. Depending upon whether or not liquor law violations are included or excluded from the definition of status offenses, the removal of these offenses from the jurisdiction of juvenile court would mean either a 28.9 percent or 21.4 percent reduction, respectively, in the number of cases processed. Further, the removal of these offenses would mean a 60.0 percent reduction in the number of females petitioned to court on a yearly basis. In the sample, females accounted for 260 petitions. Of these, 158 were petitioned for a status offense. If liquor law violations were excluded from the definition of a status offense, the number of petitions for status offenses would be 140, and there would be a 53.8 percent reduction in the number of females petitioned to court.

There may exist a concern that the caseload characteristics of one year may not reflect that of another year. In the beginning of this chapter, the statement was made that we would not expect the types of offenses processed through juvenile court to differ greatly from year to year. Table 7 presents a percentage breakdown of petitions to juvenile court by type of victimization for the study sample and a 1978 statewide

sample. Although there is some slight variation in the percentage breakdown of petitions from one sample to the other, the overall breakdown of petitions is almost identical between the two samples. In comparing the two samples, we see that crimes against property account for over 50.0 percent of the total petitions, status offenses account for approximately 29.0 percent of the total and crimes against persons, drug-related offenses, and other criminal offenses individually account for less than 10.0 percent of the total petitions filed. These findings support the assumption that the types of offenses processed by the juvenile court do not differ greatly from year to year.

TABLE 7  
PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF PETITIONS BY TYPE  
OF VICTIMIZATION FOR STUDY SAMPLE  
AND 1978 STATEWIDE SAMPLE

TYPE OF VICTIMIZATION	STUDY SAMPLE	1978 STATEWIDE SAMPLE <sup>a</sup>
Crimes against persons	9.8%	7.1%
Crimes against property	51.5%	50.2%
Drug-related offenses	4.1%	4.7%
Other criminal offenses	5.7%	8.8%
Status offenses <sup>b</sup>	28.9%	29.0%

<sup>a</sup>Includes petitions to court for the months June through December, 1978.  
SOURCE: Department of Corrections.

<sup>b</sup>Liquor law violations are included in this category.

### III. PROFILE OF THE JUVENILE COURT POPULATION

With our sample we are able not only to provide a description of the general caseload of the court on a yearly basis, but we are also able to provide an in-depth analysis of the type of juvenile being referred to court. In the following sections juvenile court histories will be examined and compared to determine whether or not there exists common characteristics among the juveniles. These comparisons will be made on the basis of certain demographic variables, offense information, and return rates to court.

#### A. THE STATUS OFFENDER

The purpose of this analysis is threefold: 1) to determine whether or not there exists within the court population a group of juveniles who can be classified as pure status offenders (i.e., those having only status offenses), 2) to determine whether these juveniles share other characteristics that distinguish them from the rest of the population, and 3) to determine whether those juveniles who are initially involved in the commission of a status offense are progressing to more serious criminal behavior.

To ascertain the existence of a pure status offender group (i.e., those juveniles adjudicated for only status offenses), the following procedure was used: The case histories of those juveniles whose first adjudication of delinquency was for a status offense were followed to see

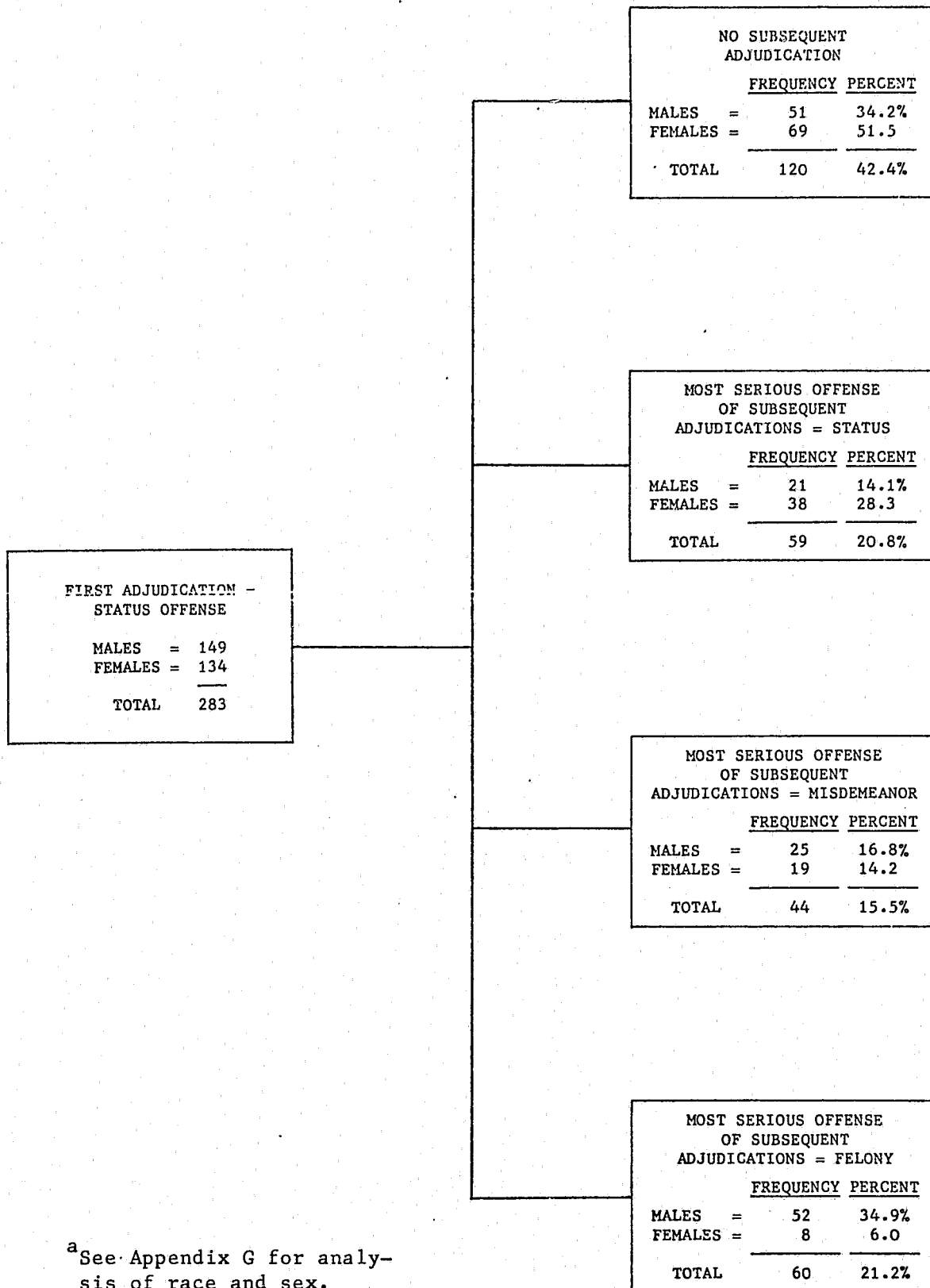
whether or not they returned to court and, if they did, the type of offense involved in the adjudication. Again, to simplify this analysis, offenses were classified as either a felony, misdemeanor, or status offense. Figure 1 illustrates the findings of this analysis. The offense listed on the right hand side of the figure represents the most serious offense for which the juvenile was adjudicated during their juvenile court involvement. For example, if a juvenile's first two adjudications in court were the result of a status offense, while his third adjudication involved in felony, he would be included in the felony category. Also, if there were two or more offenses involved in the adjudication, the most serious one was used in the classification.

As indicated by Figure 1, there were 283 juveniles (149 males and 134 females) in our sample whose first adjudication involved a status offense. Of these, 63.2 percent (179) never had a sustained offense more serious than a status offense in their court histories. (The percentage is obtained by adding the totals found in the first 2 boxes in Figure 1, no subsequent adjudication and most serious offense on subsequent adjudications = status.) This initial finding suggests that there does exist a group of juveniles that can be identified as pure status offenders. Therefore, we estimate that the status offender would constitute approximately 16.0 percent of the juvenile court population.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Of the 1,129 juveniles included in our sample, 15.8 percent (179) can be classified as a pure status offender.

**FIGURE 1: MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE COMMITTED AFTER AN INITIAL  
ADJUDICATION FOR A STATUS OFFENSE<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> See Appendix G for analysis of race and sex.



When we control for the sex of the juvenile we find a difference in subsequent offenses committed by males and females. Approximately 80.0 percent of the females never had a sustained offense more serious than a status offense in their court histories, whereas 51.7 percent of the males initially adjudicated for a status offense went on to commit a criminal type offense (i.e., misdemeanor or felony). It is clear from the figure that females dominate the status offender classification. Almost 60.0 percent of the juveniles classified as a pure status offender are female. Once a group of status offenders was identified, we attempted to find other characteristics besides sex and offense that would distinguish this group from other offenders. The juvenile's county of residence was investigated to see if the status offender represented primarily an urban or rural problem. We found no difference in the county distribution as compared to the total sample distribution. Neither was there a difference in the age at first offense for status offenders as a group or between male and female status offenders.<sup>1</sup>

#### B. THE ESCALATION THEORY

An area of concern when dealing with the status offender has been the so-called escalation theory. This theory states that without early intervention juveniles initially involved in status offenses will become involved in more serious criminal behavior. In order to test this theory properly, complete delinquent histories should be employed. Unfortunately, obtaining adequate data of this sort is difficult at best. Even if

---

<sup>1</sup>The mean age at first offense of the male status offender is 15.9, and the mean age at first offense of the female status offender is 15.4; 15.4 is also the mean age at first offense of all males and females in the sample.

arrest information could have been obtained for every juvenile in our sample, it still could be argued that this probably would not provide a complete picture of a juvenile's delinquent career. Although our analysis of the escalation theory will be confined to official court records, we believe that it is still possible to ascertain whether or not juvenile delinquent activity progresses to more serious criminal behavior with increasing age. We assume that if the theory is correct, escalation would likely be observable at any point within a juvenile's delinquent career. Based upon this assumption court records can be used as a reasonable source for testing this theory. Also, by using court data it is possible to control for certain errors that could be introduced with the use of arrest data. That is, the use of arrest information may contain the possibility of a juvenile being charged with an offense of which he is innocent.

It has also been argued that the offense listed in the petition may not be a true indicator of the activity engaged in by the juvenile. "It is legally easier to establish a petition alleging truancy and running away from home than to assemble witnesses to testify about a delinquent act. A delinquent act is all too frequently plea bargained down to a person in need of supervision (i.e., status offense)<sup>1</sup> allegation, often on the basis that it is less stigmatizing to the youth and makes a variety of services available."<sup>2</sup> The above statements, if applicable to Minnesota,

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the *Dictionary of Criminal Justice Data Terminology*, First Edition 1976, recent legislative trend has been to separate delinquents from status offenders. The status offender is sometimes called a CHINS, PINS, MINS, or JINS (child, person, minor, or juvenile in need of supervision) in some jurisdictions.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence H. Martin and Phyllis R. Snyder, "Jurisdiction over Status Offenses Should Not Be Removed from the Juvenile Court," *Crime and Delinquency* 22, 1 (1976), pp. 44-45.

would certainly throw doubt on our ability to test the escalation theory using court-recorded offenses. In response to the first statement, M.S. 260.131, Subd. 3 states that the petition shall set forth plainly the facts which bring the child within the jurisdiction of the court. It was observed directly by the authors during data collection that except for extremely few cases the offense(s) charged or listed on the petition were supported by the facts presented in the narrative portion of the petition.

The second statement argues that criminal acts are frequently plea bargained down to a person in need of supervision (i.e., status offense). The offense information for this study enables us to determine the extent of plea bargaining within the juvenile court. Offenses that were originally charged in the petition were compared to those that were ultimately disposed (i.e., those offenses that were sustained by either an admission of guilt or a trial). Of the 3,584 sustained offenses<sup>1</sup> contained in our sample, 3.4 percent (122) of them were plea bargained down to a reduced charge. When the reduced charges were investigated, we found that the plea negotiation of a criminal act resulted in a status offense only twice.

In order to examine fully the extent of plea bargaining in juvenile court, it is important to consider the possibility of an alternative form of plea negotiation taking place. For example, a juvenile may be charged with burglary and a curfew violation. Because it is legally easier to sustain the allegations of a status offense than of a criminal offense, and because dispositions are accorded the juvenile on the basis of

---

<sup>1</sup>The 3,584 offenses represent the combined total of all sustained offenses found in the juveniles' court histories.

treatment needs rather than offense,<sup>1</sup> it is a possibility that the burglary could simply be dismissed and the juvenile adjudicated a delinquent on the basis of the curfew violation. In other words, with the exceptions listed, the treatment programs where the juvenile could potentially be placed would be the same regardless of the offense disposed of in court.

To determine whether or not this situation occurs in Minnesota juvenile courts, the offenses referred to court were, again, compared to the offenses for which the juvenile was adjudicated a delinquent. This time 27 possible incidents of this type of plea negotiation could be identified. It should be noted that it is impossible to document whether or not these 27 incidents actually represent the type of plea negotiation discussed above. If we did assume that each case identified was the result of this action, the incidence of negotiating a criminal act down to a status offense is still extremely rare in the Minnesota juvenile court. On the basis of the preceding findings, we find it appropriate to use court-recorded offenses for testing the escalation theory of juvenile delinquency.

The following technique was used to learn whether or not juveniles' offenses increase in seriousness with age. For the purpose of this analysis, escalation has been operationally defined as the progression of a status offense to either a misdemeanor or felony. Juveniles who were initially adjudicated in court on a status offense were tracked to see

---

<sup>1</sup>There is an exception to this situation. Juveniles cannot be committed to the Department of Corrections for the commission of a status offense. Also, juveniles who were adjudicated in court for a status offense would not meet the established criteria for admission into the Department of Corrections' Serious Offender Program.

if their subsequent offense behavior progressed to more serious criminal activity. The results of this analysis were previously presented in Figure 1.

As illustrated by the figure, there were 283 juveniles initially adjudicated in court on a status offense. When the subsequent delinquent behavior of those juveniles who began their court career with a status offense is examined, we find that only 36.7 percent of these individuals progressed to more serious delinquent behavior (i.e., 15.5 percent went on to commit a misdemeanor and 21.2 percent went on to commit a felony).

These findings do not support a theory that all juveniles who begin their delinquent career with a status offense will later become involved in more serious criminal activity. In other words, if we assume that a juvenile referred to court initially for a status offense would return to court at some time for a criminal offense, we would be wrong 63.3 percent of the time.

These findings, however, do not contradict the theory that early intervention will prevent escalation. It could be reasoned that the relatively low rate of escalation is the result of the court's intervention.

By controlling for the sex of the offender, we discover that males have a significantly higher rate of escalation than females.<sup>1</sup> Only 20.2 percent of the females went on to commit a more serious offense, whereas the delinquent behavior of males progressed to more serious offenses in 51.7 percent of the cases. This rate of escalation for males would seem

---

<sup>1</sup> Difference of proportions test yields a statistic of 5.49,  $p < .001$ .

to throw some doubt on the theory that intervention prevents the escalation of status offenses to criminal behavior. Before rejecting the theory, it may be argued that this rate of escalation could be the result of different levels of intervention. If we assume that intervention has an effect on subsequent behavior, we might expect that increasing the degree of intervention would increase this expected effect (i.e., that the more serious the intervention the less likely escalation will occur).

To facilitate this analysis, a seriousness or severity scale for juvenile court dispositions was developed. This scale ranks juvenile court dispositions from least to most severe. It is a five-category scale ranging from no system involvement to adult referral granted. All of the final dispositions encountered in the course of data collection were placed in one of the five categories. Increasing levels of severity on the disposition scale correspond with increasing levels of supervision.

The levels are:<sup>1</sup>

- Level 0 = No System Involvement (offense was sustained, but court felt intervention was unnecessary).
- Level 1 = Limited Intervention.
- Level 2 = Formal Supervision.
- Level 3 = Out-of-Home Placement.
- Level 4 = State Commitment/Adult Referral.

Juveniles were grouped according to the severity level of their first disposition. Case histories were then searched to determine the number of juveniles in each category who progressed to more serious offenses. Based upon our assumption that intervention affects subsequent behavior, we would expect the high rate of escalation to be explained by low levels of

---

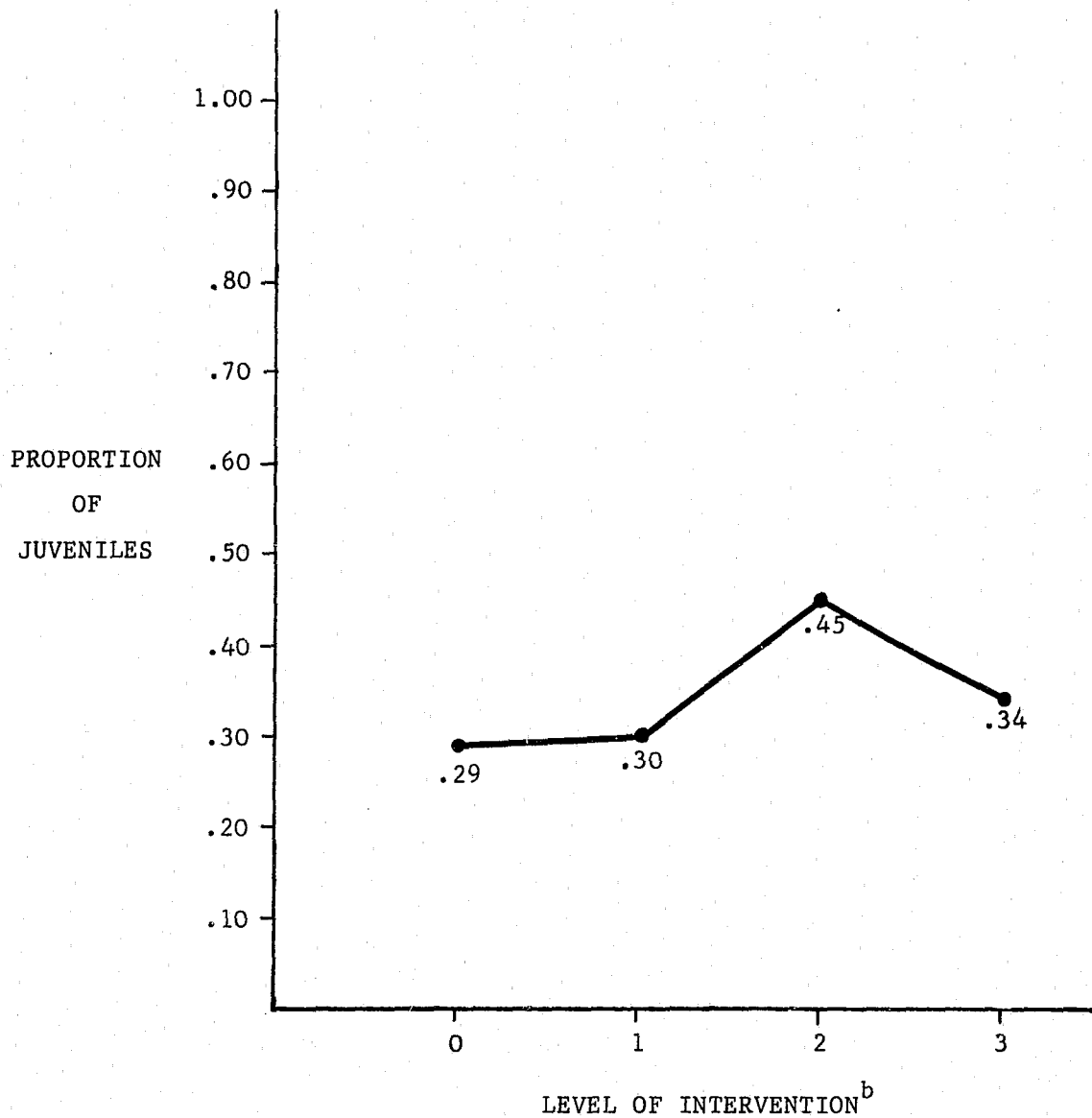
<sup>1</sup> A complete listing of all dispositions included in each level is given in Appendix H.

intervention. In other words, the proportion of juveniles progressing to more serious offenses should be lower with each increasing level of intervention.

Figure 2 illustrates this relationship between escalation rates and level of disposition. It is clear that the escalation rates do not decrease with increasing levels of intervention. When controlling for sex, we find the same result.

Our finding that higher rates of escalation are associated with higher levels of intervention could possibly be explained by the fact that dispositions (i.e., levels of intervention) are accorded by expectations of future behavior. That is, those juveniles who received a more severe disposition on their initial adjudication were perceived by the court to be potentially a more serious offender than those who received a less severe disposition. If this is in fact true, it would indicate that the court had additional information (beyond the referral to court for a status offense) that was used in determining the level of intervention for these juveniles. And this would suggest that these juveniles were involved in some other type of behavior prior to their initial adjudication in court for a status offense. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether the escalation rates for males truly represent the progression of a status offense to more serious criminal behavior.

FIGURE 2: ESCALATION RATES BY LEVEL OF INTERVENTION<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup>Escalation rates are based on the proportion of juveniles within each level of intervention who go on to commit a criminal offense (i.e., misdemeanor or felony).

<sup>b</sup>Because of the low number ( $n = 4$ ) of juveniles receiving a level 4 disposition, levels 3 and 4 were combined.



### C. THE CHRONIC RECIDIVIST

A recurring issue in the field of juvenile justice is that of the chronic delinquent. Wolfgang et al. (1972)<sup>1</sup> documented a widely held belief by law enforcement officials that there exists a small core of delinquents who are responsible for the commission of a disproportionately high number of offenses. Using as his definition of chronic behavior a juvenile who had five or more police contacts for alleged delinquent acts, Wolfgang found that "eighteen percent of the cohort offenders fall into the category of chronic recidivists. Of the 3,475 delinquents, these 627 alone were responsible for more than half of the total number of offenses committed by the delinquent group."<sup>2</sup> It seems clear that the juvenile justice system's ability to successfully treat these juveniles before they become chronic recidivists could significantly reduce the overall number of offenses committed by juveniles. Although this represents a highly desirable goal, it is not an easy one to accomplish. We must first be able to identify those juveniles who have a high probability of becoming a chronic recidivist and then provide effective treatment for them. In the following section we will provide information that may be useful to practitioners in identifying those juveniles who have a high probability of becoming a chronic recidivist.

The question of what constitutes chronic behavior could be argued at length. It is likely that the only common element in all proposed

---

<sup>1</sup>Marvin E. Wolfgang, Robert M. Figlio, and Thorsten Sellin, *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 105.

definitions of chronic behavior would be the frequency of the juvenile's return to the system.

Wolfgang's criterion was five or more police contacts for delinquent acts. Because this study deals with a court population, we are unable to duplicate his method. Therefore, we chose as our definition of a chronic recidivist a juvenile who has had three or more adjudications of delinquency. This definition is based on our knowledge that prior to a referral to court the majority of juveniles have already had several police contacts. With this definition we identified 28.0 percent (316) of the juveniles in our sample as chronic. These juveniles committed 62.0 percent of the sustained offenses included in the sample.<sup>1</sup>

The age at which our chronic recidivists began their court involvement is, not suprisingly, significantly younger than the nonchronic youths. (Mean age of the chronic group at first adjudication is 14.5, while the nonchronic group has a mean age of 15.7.)<sup>2</sup>

It would appear that one distinguishing characteristic of the chronic recidivists is their young age at onset of delinquency. To determine what effects age has on the return rates to court (i.e., the number of adjudications for delinquent acts contained within case histories) we created two groups of juveniles. The groups consists of those juveniles who were 13 or 14 years of age at first adjudication and those who were 15 or 16 years old.<sup>3</sup> Our findings are as we expected: The average number of

---

<sup>1</sup>Of the 3,584 sustained offenses, 2,222 were committed by those juveniles classified as chronic.

<sup>2</sup>Difference of means test yields a statistic of -5,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>3</sup>Ages were collapsed to increase cell frequencies.

adjudications is greater for the younger juveniles than for the older age group, 3.0 versus 2.0.

A more vivid example of the difference between these two groups is their return rate to court after a second adjudication of delinquency. Table 8 shows that 53.0 percent of the juveniles 13 or 14 years old had three or more adjudications compared to only 25.0 percent of the 15 or 16 year olds. Although striking, this finding may simply be a result of the younger juvenile having more time to recidivate. To find out if that was the case, we calculated return rates for each group based on a one-year follow-up period. After their initial adjudication, each juvenile was tracked for one year to see whether or not they returned to court. As indicated by Table 9, the return rates for the follow-up period are higher for the younger juveniles.

TABLE 8				
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF JUVENILES CLASSIFIED AS CHRONIC AND NONCHRONIC BY AGE GROUPS				
TYPE OF DELINQUENT	13 OR 14 YEAR OLDS		15 OR 16 YEAR OLDS	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Chronic	167	53.0%	96	24.9%
Nonchronic	148	47.0	290	75.1
TOTAL	315	100.0%	386	100.0%
Z = 7.7; p < .0001 (test for difference of proportions).				

TABLE 9				
RETURN RATES TO COURT AFTER AN INITIAL ADJUDICATION OF DELINQUENCY FOR A FOLLOW-UP PERIOD OF ONE YEAR FOR SELECTED AGE GROUPS BY RACE AND SEX				
RACE AND SEX	13 OR 14 YEAR OLDS		15 OR 16 YEAR OLDS <sup>b</sup>	
	Frequency	Percent Return	Frequency	Percent Return
White male	87 (n = 184) <sup>c</sup>	47.3%	103 (n = 253)	40.7%
Nonwhite male	32 (n = 46)	73.9	19 (n = 32)	59.4
White female	29 (n = 54)	53.7	23 (n = 76)	30.3
Nonwhite female	14 (n = 20)	70.0	7 (n = 13)	53.8
TOTAL	162 (n = 304)	53.3 <sup>d</sup>	152 (n = 374)	40.6 <sup>d</sup>
Z = 3.30; p < .01 (test for difference of proportions).				
<sup>a</sup> Cases with missing values, males = 8, females = 3.				
<sup>b</sup> Cases with missing values, males = 9, females = 3.				
<sup>c</sup> In each category, n is the actual number from the sample.				
<sup>d</sup> Indicates total percentage return for each age group.				

The difference in return rates for the two groups could be the result of different types of treatment. Dispositions accorded each juvenile on their first adjudication were examined to see if they could have some impact on the juveniles' return rate to court. To facilitate this analysis, the seriousness or severity scale for juvenile court dispositions was employed.

Table 10 shows that the types of dispositions received by the two age groups did not vary significantly on the first adjudication. Where type of disposition could possibly have the greatest impact in deterring a juvenile's return to court would be at severity levels 3 and 4. (These levels include county and state commitments.) The total percentage of juveniles in these two levels is virtually the same, 10.8 percent for the 13 or 14 year olds and 10.9 percent for the 15 or 16 year olds. Based upon this we would conclude that disposition has little or no effect in

determining whether or not a juvenile will return to court.

TABLE 10 SEVERITY OF DISPOSITION RECEIVED FOR INITIAL ADJUDICATION BY AGE GROUP				
LEVEL OF DISPOSITION	13 OR 14 YEAR OLDS		15 OR 16 YEAR OLDS	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Level 0	19	6.0%	23	6.0%
Level 1	84	26.7	128	33.2
Level 2	178	56.5	193	50.0
Level 3	33	10.5	37	9.5
Level 4	1	.3	5	1.3
TOTAL	315	100.0%	386	100.0%
$\chi^2 = 3.8$ (levels 3 and 4 were combined for $\chi^2$ test); $p > 0.1$ .				

These findings suggest that the probability of a juvenile becoming a chronic recidivist is not solely dependent upon the length of time a juvenile has to recidivate and that there appears to be some difference between those juveniles who begin their delinquent careers at young ages and those who are older.

To see if there existed some relationship between offense involvement and the likelihood of a juvenile becoming a chronic recidivist, the following method was employed.

We examined the initial offense for which the juveniles in our two age groups were adjudicated to see if this information could improve our ability to identify those juveniles who would go on to become chronic recidivists. The findings of this analysis are presented in Table 11. Offense information does not improve our ability in identifying the chronic recidivist. The percentage of 13 or 14 year olds who go on to become chronic is almost identical for each offense type. For the 15- or 16-year

age group, those juveniles who began their court involvement with a status offense have the highest rate of chronic involvement. However, if this finding was used as a predictor of future behavior, we would be misclassifying these youths as chronic almost 71.0 percent of the time.

TABLE 11 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF JUVENILES IN CHRONIC AND NONCHRONIC CLASSIFICATION BY TYPE OF FIRST OFFENSE AND AGE						
TYPE OF DELINQUENT BY AGE GROUP	STATUS		MISDEMEANOR		FELONY	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<u>13 or 14 Year Olds:</u>						
Chronic	57	52.8%	44	51.2%	66	54.5%
Nonchronic	51	47.2%	42	48.8%	55	45.4%
<u>15 or 16 Year Olds:</u>						
Chronic	34	29.1%	21	19.3%	41	25.6%
Nonchronic	83	70.9%	88	80.7%	119	74.4%

As indicated by Table 12, race seems to have some effect on the return rates to court for males. The majority of nonwhite males, 56.4 percent, fall into the chronic category compared to 30.7 percent of the white males. This difference between race almost disappears when female recidivism is examined.

TABLE 12 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF JUVENILES IN CHRONIC AND NONCHRONIC CLASSIFICATION BY RACE AND SEX								
TYPE OF DELINQUENT	WHITE				NONWHITE			
	MALE		FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Chronic <sup>a</sup>	192	30.7%	43	26.9%	62	56.4%	14	31.8%
Nonchronic <sup>b</sup>	433	69.3%	117	73.1%	48	43.6%	30	68.2%
Z = 5.24; p < .0001 (test for difference of proportions).								
<sup>a</sup> Cases with missing values, males = 4, females = 1.								
<sup>b</sup> Cases with missing values, males = 22, females = 10.								

It appears that age combined with sex and race will aid us in identifying those youths who have the highest probability of becoming chronic

recidivists. When overall return rates to court are examined for the two age groups, we find that the younger group has a 73.0 percent return rate to court compared to 52.3 percent for the older group. These rates are based on the number of juveniles who return to court at least once. Again, this finding suggests that age at onset plays an important role in understanding delinquency.

#### IV. ISSUES

Our analysis of juvenile delinquency in Minnesota has, in three reports, presented information and discussed issues related to three types of juvenile delinquents: the status offender, the "violent" or "hard-core" (or serious) offender, and the chronic recidivist. Issues surrounding the serious offender have been dealt with in our two previous reports.<sup>1</sup> Here, we shall bring our research findings to bear on the issues that pertain to status offenders and chronic recidivists.

Perhaps the most controversial issue facing the juvenile justice system is whether jurisdiction over status offenses should be removed from the juvenile court.

There are, in the final analysis, only two positions that can be taken on this issue. The first is to confer jurisdiction over status offenses to the state's juvenile or family court. This can be a very broad jurisdictional grant, covering all behaviors ordinarily considered status offenses, or a very restricted grant, making state intervention in a child's life the exception rather than the norm.

The other alternative is not to confer jurisdiction over status offenses to the court. This would preclude any state intervention in a child's life unless he or she had committed a criminal act or is subject to the court's jurisdiction on the basis of dependency or neglect.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>See *Alternative Definitions of "Violent" or "Hard-Core" Juvenile Offenders: Some Empirical and Legal Implications* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Crime Control Planning Board, 1977), revised 1978 and *Serious Juvenile Delinquency in Minnesota* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Crime Control Planning Board, 1977), revised 1978.

<sup>2</sup>U.S., Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Jurisdiction--Status Offenses* by the National Task Force to Develop Standards and Goals



Many of the arguments both for and against the removal of status offenses from the court's jurisdiction are based upon certain assumptions regarding juvenile behavior and the functioning of the court. Our investigation of the status offender did provide information relevant to some of these assumptions.

One argument used for maintaining jurisdiction is that status offenses provide practitioners with easy access to gaining control over "problem" youths. "It is legally easier to establish a petition alleging truancy and running away from home than to assemble witnesses to testify about a delinquent act."<sup>1</sup> Our study found this type of offense charging to be the exception and not the rule in Minnesota. As stated previously, it was observed directly by the authors during data collection that except for extremely few cases the offense(s) charged or listed on the petition were supported by the facts presented in the narrative portion of the petition. Also, the overwhelming majority (71.1 percent) of petitions filed in court involve criminal allegations (i.e., 40.6 percent felony charges and 30.5 percent misdemeanor charges). These two findings suggest that practitioners in Minnesota are more interested in establishing the actual reasons for the juvenile being petitioned to court than providing themselves with an easy mechanism for gaining control over delinquent youths.

It has also been argued that there is no reason for differential treatment between status offenders and criminal offenders because they

---

for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 2.

<sup>1</sup>Lawrence H. Martin and Phyllis R. Snyder, "Jurisdiction over Status Offenses Should Not Be Removed from the Juvenile Court," *Crime and Delinquency* 22, 1 (1976), p. 44.

are in reality the same type of offender. "A delinquent act is all too frequently plea bargained down to a person in need of supervision (i.e., status offense) allegation, often on the basis that it is less stigmatizing to the youth and makes a variety of services available. It is, therefore, not likely that we are truly considering two different kinds of offenders if we look upon the adjudication alone as the determinant of such difference."<sup>1</sup> The data indicate that this type of practice is not common in Minnesota. We found only two cases of a criminal offense being plea bargained down to a status offense. This finding and our knowledge that the offense listed in the petition is a good indicator of the juvenile's behavior suggest that there is considerable difference between a juvenile adjudicated for a status offense and a juvenile adjudicated for a criminal offense.

"Another rationale in support of the juvenile court having jurisdiction over the specific behaviors denominated status offenses stems from the belief that these in some manner predict future more serious deviant behavior."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the argument runs, the court must intervene to prevent this offense escalation. According to our findings, the majority of juveniles (63.2 percent) whose initial adjudication involved a status offense never had a sustained offense more serious than a status offense in their juvenile court histories. Proponents of this argument might contend that this low rate of escalation was the result of the court's intervention. To the contrary, our analysis of the escalation theory provided no support for this argument. In fact, the data indicate that

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>A. Gough, "The Beyond-Control Child and the Right to Treatment: An Exercise in the Synthesis of Paradox," *St. Louis University Law Review* 16 (1972), pp. 182 and 189.

higher rates of offense escalation were associated with higher levels of intervention.

Finally, in discussing whether jurisdiction over status offenses should be removed from the juvenile court, it is necessary to consider other changes that are currently being proposed for the juvenile court. Certain proposed changes could alter the juvenile court in such a way that it would be either too costly or totally inappropriate for the court to maintain jurisdiction over status offenses. These changes may result from a legislative decision to provide special programming to a group of serious juvenile offenders.

To explain how these changes will occur, it is necessary to begin with an understanding of the philosophical origins of the juvenile court.

The juvenile court was born in an aura of reform, and it spread with amazing speed. The conception of the delinquent as a wayward child first specifically came to life in April 1899, when the Illinois legislature passed the Juvenile Court Act, creating the first statewide court especially for children. It did not create a new court; it did include most of the features that have since come to distinguish the juvenile court. The original act and the amendments to it that shortly followed brought together under one jurisdiction cases of dependency, neglect, and delinquency. . . . Hearings were to be informal and nonpublic, records confidential, children detained apart from adults, a probation staff appointed. In short, children were not to be treated as criminals nor dealt with by the processes used for criminals.<sup>1</sup>

With the passage of time, the philosophies of the juvenile courts evolved into almost a total concern with the social and psychological conditions that lead to youthful . . . violations. By virtually eliminating the court's concern for the specific offenses that brought children under the court's jurisdiction, the concept that children should not be held accountable for their actions was developed. This philosophical orientation succeeded in allowing the court to

---

<sup>1</sup> Frank Miller, Robert Dawson, George Dix, and Raymond Parnas, *The Juvenile Justice Process* (New York: The Foundation Press, Inc., 1976), p. 5.

establish authority over juveniles so that services could be provided while, at the same time, the child was protected by the benevolent arm of the court.<sup>1</sup>

However, in recent years, citizens, practitioners, and policy makers have requested that the emphasis of juvenile court change. This change in emphasis must be examined fully to determine what impact it will have on the juvenile court. A bill, S.F. 693, 70th Minnesota Legislative Session (1977-78) introduced in Minnesota the concept of mandatory determinate sentencing for juveniles. If the bill had passed, it would have required that a child 15 years of age or older and adjudicated delinquent for a felony which is a crime against person be placed in the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections and be confined without release for a determinate term as follows: 1) three years for murder in the first, second, or third degree; or 2) two years for manslaughter in the first degree, aggravated assault, aggravated robbery, kidnapping, false imprisonment, criminal sexual conduct in the first, second, or third degree, arson in the first degree, and burglary of a dwelling where the defendant possesses a weapon or commits an assault upon a person present. Other bills have been introduced which would require secure placement or removal from the juvenile court jurisdiction persons who fall into specific classifications. S.F. 671, 71st Minnesota Legislative Session (1979-80) requires automatic transfer to adult court for those juveniles who meet specific age, offense, and offense history criteria.

---

<sup>1</sup>Christopher Martin, "Status Offenders and the Juvenile Justice System: Where Do They Belong?" *Juvenile Justice* 28, 1 (1977), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Requires transfer to adult court a person who: a) has attained the age of 16 years; and b) is charged with murder in the first degree; c) has been adjudicated delinquent for an offense committed within the preceding 24 months, which offense would be a felony if committed by an adult, and

The introduction of these bills is evidence that citizens, practitioners, and policy makers desire a change in the philosophy of the juvenile court as it pertains to a specific group of juveniles (i.e., those juveniles who have committed a felony). This change is a reversion to the treatment of a certain class of juveniles as criminals. In this instance, the emphasis is on the offense rather than on the "social and psychological conditions that lead to youthful violations." Although social and psychological conditions would presumably still be considered factors at some stage of juvenile court proceedings, the offense would become paramount in the determination of the treatment of the juvenile. As is the case in the adult criminal system, accountability for specific criminal acts would be the focus of the court's operating philosophy.

The question then becomes what impact would such a change have on the operating procedures of the juvenile court. It seems certain that at least two procedural changes will occur. Due to the increased severity of consequences a true adversary system (between the state and a specific class of juveniles defined by legislation) would develop. It is reasonable to conclude that juveniles facing secure commitment would be more likely to deny the allegations of a petition and avail themselves

---

is charged with murder in the second or third degree, manslaughter in the first degree, criminal sexual conduct in the first degree or aggravated assault with great bodily harm; or d) has been adjudicated delinquent for two offenses, not in the same behavioral incident, which offenses were committed within the preceding 24 months and which would be felonies if committed by an adult and is charged with manslaughter in the second degree, kidnapping, criminal sexual conduct in the second degree, arson in the first degree, or aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon; or e) has been previously adjudicated delinquent for three offenses, none of which offenses were committed in the same behavioral incident, which offenses would be felonies if committed by an adult, and is charged with any felony other than those described in clauses (b), (c), or (d).

of their rights to due process. In this same vein, a juvenile court which establishes the offense as the only basis for incarceration or transfer to the adult system, could necessitate granting the panoply of constitutional rights now accorded adults. These procedural changes could increase the amount of time and resources necessary to process these cases. Consequently, this would mean a severe drain on the already limited resources available to the juvenile court.<sup>1</sup>

Given that these changes would apply only to a specific class of juveniles, the court would be faced with a clear philosophical division. On one side would be the benevolent arm that seeks to provide services to one class of juveniles, while the other side would provide a prescribed system of punishment.

Faced with these possible changes it is imperative that decision makers evaluate whether the needs of the status offender still can be best served by the juvenile court.

Unlike the status or serious offender, specific program changes have not been proposed for the chronic recidivist. Indeed, the problem of the chronic recidivist has not received great attention by policy makers. This is unfortunate in that a relatively small percentage of juveniles account for the majority of offenses brought before the juvenile court. We found that 28.0 percent of the juveniles sampled committed 62.0 percent of the sustained offenses. It seems clear that the system's ability to control the chronic recidivist could significantly

---

<sup>1</sup>For further information see *Alternative Definitions of "Violent" or "Hard-Core" Juvenile Offenders: Some Empirical and Legal Implications* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Crime Control Planning Board, 1977), revised 1978, pp. 25-64.

reduce juvenile crime. Although a highly desirable goal, it will not be an easy one to accomplish. We must first be able to identify those juveniles who have a high probability of becoming a chronic recidivist and then be able to provide effective treatment for them.

In general, the best single predictor of repeat delinquent activity is age at first adjudication. Younger juveniles (i.e., 13 or 14 year olds) have a 73.0 percent return rate to court compared to 52.0 percent for the older juveniles (i.e., 15 or 16 year olds).

This finding that age at first adjudication is the best predictor of recidivism also pertains to chronic recidivists, who we have defined as those with three or more adjudications of delinquency. Of juveniles who began their court involvement at age 13 or 14, 53.0 percent eventually had three or more adjudications compared to only 25.0 percent of those who began their court involvement at age 15 or 16.

To get an idea of the magnitude of the chronic recidivist problem, we can estimate the number of 13 or 14 year olds coming to court each year who will later be chronic. On a statewide basis this number may exceed 900 juveniles annually. Additional chronic recidivists begin their careers at older ages.

In sum, the chronic offender presents a three-fold problem: 1) their numbers are relatively large for program purposes, 2) their young age at first adjudication narrows the range of alternatives for dealing with them, and 3) we have no sure way of predicting which young delinquents will become chronic recidivists. Many of the solutions that have recently been proposed for court reform as they pertain to serious delinquents would affect only a portion of chronic recidivists and then only

in the later stages of their juvenile careers. It will take new and creative thinking about the juvenile court to resolve the chronic recidivist problem.



## A P P E N D I C E S

- A. Summary of Major Findings on the Serious Juvenile Offender
- B. Listing of Demographic and Legal/Offense-Related Variables
- C. Estimating Procedure
- D. Living Arrangements in 1975 by Race
- E. Listing of Offenses by Type of Crime
- F. Listing of Offenses Based upon the Type of Victimization
- G. Results of Escalation Analysis: Most Serious Offense Committed after an Initial Adjudication for a Status Offense by Race
- H. Severity Scale for Juvenile Court Dispositions

## APPENDIX A

### SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS ON THE SERIOUS JUVENILE OFFENDER

The first phase of our research on the serious juvenile offender, *Alternative Definitions of "Violent" or "Hard-Core" Juvenile Offenders'*

*Some Empirical and Legal Implications*, had three major purposes:

1. To test various proposed definitions of "violent" or "hard-core" behavior, to determine if they in fact differentiate between groups of serious and nonserious offenders.
2. To provide estimates of the potential target groups under each definition.
3. To investigate and discuss any relevant legal issues surrounding the classification of a group of juveniles as "violent" or "hard-core" offenders.

The major findings of this report are:

1. That each of the definitions proposed to date did differentiate between a group of serious and nonserious offenders.
2. That the potential target groups could range in size from 100 to over 4,000 juveniles depending on the definition used, and
3. That a statewide definition of "violent" or "hard-core" juvenile offenders based upon age, type of offense, number of offenses, or any combination of these three factors is permissible for equal protection purposes, and the classification may include or exclude these juveniles from the juvenile system.

Our report entitled *Serious Delinquency in Minnesota* represents the second phase of our research in the area of the "violent" or "hard-core" juvenile offender.

The primary questions addressed in this report are:

1. What type of offender is being identified by the various definitions of "violent" or "hard-core" juvenile offender?
2. Are the definitions predictive in nature? In other words are those juveniles classified as violent or hard core under various definitions likely to commit additional serious crimes?

APPENDIX A  
(continued)

3. What factors (e.g., age type of offense, disposition, etc.) in a juveniles court record best predict his future offense behavior?

The major findings of this report are as follows:

1. Juveniles included under the various definitions of "violent" or "hard-core" are typically repeat property offenders--not repeat violent offenders.
2. In general, the definitions proposed so far are not successful at predicting which juveniles shall go on to commit additional serious crimes.
3. The best single predictor of repeat serious delinquency is age. The recidivism rate among juvenile delinquents drops rapidly with increasing age. The juveniles most likely to commit repeated serious crimes are the 13 or 14 year olds who have a prior felony in their record. However, if a juvenile has committed only a single violent crime, it is not a good predictor of his future delinquency. All prediction rules are subject to serious errors of misclassification of juveniles.
4. We find no evidence that juveniles who begin with status offenses at a young age are the career criminals of the future. To the contrary, those who start out at an early age with serious crimes are the most likely to continue on in serious delinquent activity.
5. It is not possible to predict with a high degree of certainty which juveniles shall commit acts of violence. But in any case, it is the rare juvenile in Minnesota who has a history of violent crimes.
6. Under current practices, what the courts do with a juvenile, i.e., the disposition accorded, does not appear to have any substantial effect on whether he will commit additional serious crimes. However, the more charges against a juvenile that are dismissed, the greater the tendency to recidivate.

APPENDIX B

LISTING OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND LEGAL/OFFENSE  
RELATED VARIABLES

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Birthdate/Age

Sex

Race/National Origin

Marital Status of the juvenile's natural mother and father

Living arrangement of juvenile at sampling offense

County of residence

LEGAL/OFFENSE RELATED VARIABLES

Level (i.e., intake or probation) at which offense was introduced into  
the court system

Number and type of offenses on each referral

Date on which court process began on each referral

Source of referral

Court activity (e.g., whether the juvenile admitted to the allegations  
of the petition or the allegations were found true in court)

Final disposition

Single or multiple disposition (i.e., was more than one offense included  
in the final disposition)

Date of the final disposition

APPENDIX C  
ESTIMATING PROCEDURE

The procedure for estimating the total number of juvenile petitions statewide uses the number of petitions found in the Crime Control Planning Board's juvenile court sample as a base. This number is one-sixth of the total number of the petitions for the counties covered by the two-month sample.

The sample counties themselves cover 52.7 percent of the state's juvenile population between the ages of 10 and 17. Therefore, a reasonable estimate for the statewide number is 11.385 times the number of petitions actually found in the sample, assuming that the number is representative of the entire year and the state's juvenile population.

Let  $N_T$  be the estimated statewide number of petitions and  $n$  the number in the sample. Then:

$$n = \frac{1}{6} \times 0.527 \times N_T,$$

$$N_T = \frac{6n}{0.527},$$

$$N_T = 11.385n,$$

$$n = 1,187 \text{ (number of petitions in sample).}$$

Therefore:

$$N_T = 11.385 \times 1,187,$$

$$N_T = 13,514.$$

APPENDIX D  
LIVING ARRANGEMENT IN 1975 BY RACE

	M A L E S					
	R A C E					ROW
LIVING ARRANGEMENT	White	Black	Indian	Other	Unknown	TOTAL
<u>Mother and Father:</u>						
Percent	49.5%	8.1%	24.4%	16.7%	28.9%	43.2%
Frequency	352	7	10	1	11	381
<u>Mother Only:</u>						
Percent	23.3%	51.2%	43.9%	66.7%	13.2%	26.9%
Frequency	166	44	18	4	5	237
<u>Mother and Stepfather:</u>						
Percent	6.5%	8.1%	7.3%	---	7.9%	6.7%
Frequency	46	7	3	---	3	59
<u>Father Only:</u>						
Percent	4.1%	4.7%	2.4%	16.7%	---	4.0%
Frequency	29	4	1	1	---	35
<u>Father and Stepmother:</u>						
Percent	2.0%	---	---	---	---	1.6%
Frequency	14	---	---	---	---	14
<u>Relative:</u>						
Percent	1.1%	4.7%	7.3%	---	5.3%	1.9%
Frequency	8	4	3	---	2	17
<u>Adoptive Parents:</u>						
Percent	0.4%	1.2%	---	---	---	0.5%
Frequency	3	1	---	---	---	4
<u>Foster/Group Home:</u>						
Percent	2.7%	2.3%	---	---	2.6%	2.5%
Frequency	19	2	---	---	1	22
<u>Institution County or State:</u>						
Percent	---	---	---	---	---	---
Frequency	---	---	---	---	---	---
<u>Other:</u>						
Percent	0.8%	2.3%	---	---	---	0.9%
Frequency	6	2	---	---	---	8
<u>Self:</u>						
Percent	0.3%	---	---	---	---	0.2%
Frequency	2	---	---	---	---	2
<u>Child Caring Center:</u>						
Percent	1.5%	---	---	---	---	1.2%
Frequency	11	---	---	---	---	11
<u>Unknown:</u>						
Percent	7.7%	17.4%	14.6%	---	42.1%	10.4%
Frequency	55	15	6	---	16	92
<u>TOTAL:</u> <sup>a</sup>						
Percent	80.6%	9.8%	4.6%	.7%	4.3%	100.0%
Frequency	711	86	41	6	38	882

APPENDIX D  
(Continued)

F E M A L E S

<u>LIVING ARRANGEMENT</u>	<u>R A C E</u>					<u>ROW TOTAL</u>
	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Indian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Unknown</u>	
<u>Mother and Father:</u>						
Percent	39.8%	10.0%	23.1%	---	7.7%	32.8%
Frequency	74	3	3	---	1	81
<u>Mother Only:</u>						
Percent	28.5%	60.0%	38.5%	40.0%	38.5%	33.6%
Frequency	53	18	5	2	5	83
<u>Mother and Stepfather:</u>						
Percent	10.8%	3.3%	---	60.0%	7.7%	10.1%
Frequency	20	1	---	3	1	25
<u>Father Only:</u>						
Percent	2.7%	---	---	---	---	2.0%
Frequency	5	---	---	---	---	5
<u>Father and Stepmother:</u>						
Percent	1.1%	3.3%	---	---	---	1.2%
Frequency	2	1	---	---	---	3
<u>Relative:</u>						
Percent	0.5%	3.3%	15.4%	---	7.7%	2.0%
Frequency	1	1	2	---	1	5
<u>Adoptive Parents:</u>						
Percent	0.5%	---	---	---	---	0.4%
Frequency	1	---	---	---	---	1
<u>Foster/Group Home:</u>						
Percent	5.4%	3.3%	15.4%	---	7.7%	5.7%
Frequency	10	1	2	---	1	14
<u>Institution County or State:</u>						
Percent	0.5%	---	---	---	---	0.4%
Frequency	1	---	---	---	---	1
<u>Other:</u>						
Percent	---	3.3%	7.7%	---	---	0.8%
Frequency	---	1	1	---	---	2
<u>Self:</u>						
Percent	---	---	---	---	---	---
Frequency	---	---	---	---	---	---
<u>Child Caring Center:</u>						
Percent	1.6%	---	---	---	---	1.2%
Frequency	3	---	---	---	---	3
<u>Unknown:</u>						
Percent	8.6%	13.3%	---	---	30.8%	9.7%
Frequency	16	4	---	---	4	24
<u>TOTAL:<sup>b</sup></u>						
Percent	75.3%	12.1%	5.3%	2.0%	5.3%	100.0%
Frequency	186	30	13	5	13	247

<sup>a</sup>The totals are percentages of 882.

<sup>b</sup>The totals are percentages of 247.

APPENDIX E  
LISTING OF OFFENSES BY TYPE OF CRIME<sup>1</sup>

FELONY

Aggravated Rape  
Murder, Third Degree  
Aggravated Arson  
Aggravated Robbery  
Kidnapping  
Aggravated Assault  
Robbery  
Aggravated Forgery  
Receiving Stolen Property  
    (value over \$100.00)  
Burglary  
Aggravated Criminal Damage  
    to Property (damage over  
    \$100.00)  
Distribution of Major Drugs  
    (sale of nonnarcotics, over  
    1.5 ounces of marijuana, LSD,  
    hashish, stimulants, and de-  
    pressants  
Arson  
Theft (value over \$100.00)  
Criminal Negligence Resulting  
    in Death  
Unauthorized use of Motor  
    Vehicle  
Forgery  
Possession of Major Drugs  
    (possession of nonnarcotics,  
    over 1.5 ounces of marijuana,  
    LSD, hashish, stimulants, and  
    depressants  
Possession of Burglary Tools  
False Imprisonment  
Terroristics Threats  
Other Major Property  
Other Major Person Offense

MISDEMEANOR

Riot  
Prostitution  
Resisting Arrest  
Distribution of Marijuana  
    (sale of less than 1.5  
    ounces)  
Possession of Marijuana  
    (possession of less than  
    1.5 ounces)  
Simple Assault  
Contempt of Court  
Criminal Damage to Property  
    (damage under \$100.00)  
Disorderly Conduct  
Driving after Suspension of  
    License  
Driving while under the In-  
    fluence of Intoxicants  
Reckless Driving  
Other Criminal Traffic Offense  
Escape  
False Fire Alarm  
Receiving Stolen Property  
    (value under \$100.00)  
Riding in Stolen Vehicle  
Tampering with Auto  
Theft (value under \$100.00)  
Trespassing  
Loitering  
Unlawful Possession of Pre-  
    scription Drugs  
Use of False Identification  
Fraud (value under \$100.00)  
Possession of Dangerous Weapons  
Falsely Reporting Crime  
Harassing Phone Calls  
Possession of Hypodermic Needle  
Violation of Game Laws  
Other Minor Person Offense  
Other Minor Property Offense  
Other Misdemeanor

---

<sup>1</sup>Offenses listed represent only those found in the sample of juvenile offenders.



APPENDIX E  
(continued)

STATUS

Absenting  
Incorrigibility  
Truancy  
Curfew Violation  
Possession or Consumption  
of Alcohol  
Possession of Toxic Glue  
Use of Tobacco  
Other Status Offense

APPENDIX F  
LISTING OF OFFENSES BASED UPON  
THE TYPE OF VICTIMIZATION<sup>1</sup>

CRIMES AGAINST PERSON

Aggravated Rape  
Murder, Third Degree  
Aggravated Robbery  
Kidnapping  
Aggravated Assault  
Robbery  
Criminal Negligence Resulting  
in Death  
False Imprisonment  
Simple Assault  
Other Major Person Offense  
Other Minor Person Offense

CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY

Aggravated Arson  
Aggravated Forgery  
Receiving Stolen Property (value  
over \$100.00)  
Arson  
Burglary  
Aggravated Criminal Damage to  
Property (damage over \$100.00)  
Theft (value over \$100.00)  
Unauthorized Use of Motor Vehicle  
Forgery  
Possession of Burglary Tools  
Criminal Damage to Property (dam-  
age under \$100.00)  
Receiving Stolen Property (value  
under \$100.00)  
Riding in Stolen Vehicle  
Tampering with Auto  
Theft (value under \$100.00)  
Trespassing  
Fraud (value under \$100.00)  
Other Major Property Offenses  
Other Minor Property Offenses

DRUG-RELATED OFFENSES

Distribution of Major Drugs  
(sale of nonnarcotics, over  
1.5 ounces of marijuana, LSD,  
hashish, stimulants, and de-  
pressants)  
Possession of Major Drugs  
(possession of nonnarcotics,  
over 1.5 ounces of marijuana,  
LSD, hashish, stimulants, and  
depressants)  
Distribution of Marijuana (sale  
of less than 1.5 ounces)  
Possession of Marijuana (less  
than 1.5 ounces)  
Unlawful Possession of Prescrip-  
tion Drugs  
Possession of Hypodermic Needle

OTHER CRIMINAL OFFENSES

Terroristic Threats  
Riot  
Prostitution  
Resisting Arrest  
Contempt of Court  
Disorderly Conduct  
Driving after Suspension  
of License  
Driving while under the Influ-  
ence of Intoxicants  
Reckless Driving  
Other Criminal Traffic  
Escape  
False Fire Alarm  
Loitering  
Possession of Dangerous Weapons  
Falsely Reporting Crime  
Harassing Phone Calls  
Violation of Game Laws  
Use of False Identification  
Other

---

<sup>1</sup>Offenses listed represent only those found in the sample of juvenile offenders.

APPENDIX F  
(Continued)

STATUS OFFENSES

Absenting  
Incorrigibility  
Truancy  
Curfew Violation  
Other Status Offenses

DRUG VIOLATIONS FOR MINORS

Possession or Consumption of  
Alcohol  
Possession of Toxic Glue  
Use of Tobacco

# APPENDIX G

## RESULTS OF ESCALATION ANALYSIS: MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE COMMITTED AFTER AN INITIAL ADJUDICATION FOR A STATUS OFFENSE BY RACE

### MALES:

FIRST ADJUDICATIONS = STATUS OFFENSE	
WHITE	= 124
NONWHITE	= 16
UNKNOWN	= 9
TOTAL	<u>149</u>

NO SUBSEQUENT ADJUDICATIONS	
	FREQUENCY PERCENT
WHITE	= 44 35.5%
NONWHITE	= 1 6.3
UNKNOWN	= 6 66.7
TOTAL	<u>51 34.2%</u>

MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE OF SUBSEQUENT ADJUDICATIONS = STATUS	
	FREQUENCY PERCENT
WHITE	= 19 15.3%
NONWHITE	= 1 6.3
UNKNOWN	= 1 11.1
TOTAL	<u>21 14.1%</u>

MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE OF SUBSEQUENT ADJUDICATIONS = MISDEMEANOR	
	FREQUENCY PERCENT
WHITE	= 22 17.7%
NONWHITE	= 2 12.5
UNKNOWN	= 1 11.1
TOTAL	<u>25 16.8%</u>

MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE OF SUBSEQUENT ADJUDICATIONS = FELONY	
	FREQUENCY PERCENT
WHITE	= 39 31.5%
NONWHITE	= 12 75.0
UNKNOWN	= 1 11.1
TOTAL	<u>52 34.9%</u>

APPENDIX G  
(continued)

F E M A L E S:

FIRST ADJUDICATIONS = STATUS OFFENSE		
WHITE	=	110
NONWHITE	=	16
UNKNOWN	=	8
TOTAL		134

NO SUBSEQUENT ADJUDICATIONS		
	<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
WHITE	= 58	52.7%
NONWHITE	= 4	25.0
UNKNOWN	= 7	87.5
TOTAL	69	51.5%

MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE OF SUBSEQUENT ADJUDICATIONS = STATUS		
	<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
WHITE	= 30	27.3%
NONWHITE	= 7	43.8
UNKNOWN	= 1	12.5
TOTAL	38	28.3%

MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE OF SUBSEQUENT ADJUDICATIONS = MISDEMEANOR		
	<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
WHITE	= 15	13.6%
NONWHITE	= 4	25.0
UNKNOWN	= --	--
TOTAL	19	14.2%

MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE OF SUBSEQUENT ADJUDICATIONS = FELONY		
	<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
WHITE	= 7	5.2%
NONWHITE	= 1	6.3
UNKNOWN	= --	--
TOTAL	8	6.0%

## APPENDIX H

### SEVERITY SCALE FOR JUVENILE COURT DISPOSITIONS

#### LEVEL 0 = NO SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT

Dismissed  
Reprimanded and Released by Court

#### LEVEL 1 = LIMITED INTERVENTION

Attend School  
Curfew  
Driver's License Canceled  
Driver's License Suspended  
Driver's License Suspended/  
Driving with Permission  
Educational Resource  
Find Job  
No Contact with Certain People  
Teen Counseling  
Tutoring  
Alcohol/Drug Program  
Case Closed after Interim Dis-  
position  
Counseling by Probation Offi-  
cer (informal probation)  
County Welfare Supervision  
Family/Juvenile Counseling  
Agency  
Mental/Medical Health Center  
Participate in Program (e.g.,  
gun safety)  
Live in Relative's Home  
Group Counseling  
Return to Parental Home  
Court Not Needed  
Court Ineffective

#### LEVEL 2 = FORMAL SUPERVISION

Military  
Probation  
Outpatient Drug  
Outpatient Medical  
Outpatient Psychological  
Restitution  
Stayed County Commitment  
Stayed Commitment to Depart-  
ment of Corrections  
Unpaid Work  
Foster Home  
Pay Court Emergency Fund  
Private Doctor Therapy

#### LEVEL 3 = OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT WITH SUPERVISION

Group Home  
Residential Treatment Facility  
County Commitment  
Inpatient Medical  
Inpatient Drug  
Inpatient Psychological  
Short Stay at Juvenile Center

#### LEVEL 4 = STATE COMMITMENT/ADULT REFERRAL

Commitment to Department of Cor-  
rections  
Adult Referral Granted

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Biele, Linda; Sommerer, Carl; Grant, Larry; and Genadek, Donald. *Alternative Definitions of "Violent" or "Hard-Core" Juvenile Offenders: Some Empirical and Legal Implications*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Crime Control Planning Board, 1977. Revised 1978.
- Clarke, Stephen. "Some Implications for North Carolina of Recent Research in Juvenile Delinquency." *Crime and Delinquency* 12 (1), 1975:51-60.
- Davis, Samuel. *Rights of Juveniles*. New York: Clark Boardman Company, Ltd., 1974.
- Good, Dale. *Analysis of Juvenile Justice Systems in Three Minnesota Counties, Part I*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Crime Control Planning Board, 1979.
- Gough, A. "The Beyond-Control Child and the Right to Treatment: An Exercise in the Synthesis of Paradox." *St. Louis University Law Review* 16, 1972:182, 189.
- Hamparian, Donna; Schuster, Richard; Dintz, Simon; and Conrad, John. *The Violent Few*. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1978.
- Hennepin County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. *Hennepin County Criminal Justice Plan*. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1978.
- Hennessy, Michael; Richard, Pamela; and Berk, Richard. "Broken Homes and Middle Class Delinquency: A Reassessment." *Criminology* 18 (4), 1978:505-528.
- Loesch, Jeffrey. *Anoka County Juvenile Intake Report*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Crime Control Planning Board, 1978.
- Martin, Christopher. "Status Offenders and the Juvenile Justice System: Where Do They Belong?" *Juvenile Justice* 28 (1), 1977:7-17.
- Martin, Lawrence and Snyder, Phyllis. "Jurisdiction over Status Offenses Should Not Be Removed from the Juvenile Court." *Crime and Delinquency* 22 (1), 1976:44-47.
- Matza, David. *Delinquency and Drift*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964.

- Miller, Frank; Dawson, Robert; Dix, George; and Parnas, Raymond. *The Juvenile Justice Process*. Mineola, New York: The Foundation Press, Inc., 1976.
- Minnesota, Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control. *Comprehensive Plan*. St. Paul, Minnesota, 1976.
- Minnesota, Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. *1975 Uniform Crime Reports*. St. Paul, Minnesota.
- Minnesota, Office of State Demographer. *Minnesota Population Projections 1970-2000*. St. Paul, Minnesota, 1975.
- National Council on Crime and Delinquency. "Jurisdiction over Status Offenses Should be Removed from the Juvenile Court." *Crime and Delinquency* 21 (2), 1975:97-99.
- National Council on Crime and Delinquency. *Status Offenders and the Juvenile Justice System: An Anthology*. Hackensack, New Jersey, 1978.
- Platt, Anthony. *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.
- Sommerer, Linda; Coleman, Stephen; and Genadek, Donald. *Serious Juvenile Delinquency in Minnesota*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Crime Control Planning Board, 1978.
- Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Study Commission. *Report to the Minnesota Supreme Court*. Minnesota Supreme Court, 1976.
- Thomas, Charles. "Are Status Offenders Really So Different." *Crime and Delinquency* 22 (4), 1976:438-455.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. *General Population Characteristics*. (Final Report PC(1)-B25 Minnesota.) Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971.
- U.S. Congress, Senate. *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974*. Public Law 93-415, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974.
- U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *Special Requirements for Participation in Funding under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974*. January 16, 1974.
- U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service. *Dictionary of Criminal Justice Data Terminology* by SEARCH Group, Inc. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976.



U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration,  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, National  
Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *Juris-  
diction--Status Offenses* by The National Task Force to Develop  
Standards and Goals for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.  
Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977.

Wolfgang, Marvin; Figlio, Robert; and Sellin, Thorsten. *Delinquency in  
a Birth Cohort*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972.

**END**